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FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5677
INFO RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2681
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 8897
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 2306
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 7161
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 6340
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 1570
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0521
RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA 3374
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 000458

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TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [AG](#)
SUBJECT: "YEAR OF THE STRIKE" CONTINUES

REF: A. ALGIERS 332
[1](#)B. 07 ALGIERS 1037

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Thomas F. Daughton;
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Algeria's autonomous unions staged another nationwide strike from April 13 to 15. Participation rates varied and the country did not grind to a halt. In an unusual development, riot police dispersed demonstrating strikers near the Central Post Office in Algiers. Although the level of frustration among ordinary Algerians is palpably high, the labor actions do not appear to be tapping into it effectively. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The "year of the strike" continues in Algeria (ref A). Twenty autonomous unions (non-state affiliated unions representing a variety of professions) engaged in a nationwide strike April 13-15. As in previous actions, workers struck over working conditions, wages and purchasing power. In contrast to previous strikes, both the Inter-trade Union Organization and the National Coordination of Autonomous Unions participated in the April strike. According to press reports, strike participation rates varied by region and sector. The French-language daily Liberte reported April 16 that the participation rate in the public health sector was less than one percent. The French-language daily El Watan reported the same day that, according to National Union of Education Workers member Mabrouk Rahmouni, 59.5 percent of potential strikers participated in the April 13 and 14 strikes in the wilaya (province) of Adrar, located in southwest Algeria. El Watan also quoted National Council of Secondary and Technical Teachers member M. Zemzoum as saying that his union had a three-day participation rate of 75 percent in the wilaya of Skikda, located in eastern Algeria.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Anti-riot brigades were deployed against demonstrators near the Central Post Office in Algiers (the number of protesters is unclear, though appears to have been at least dozens). According to March 16 newspapers and the observations of some of our local staff, the police used force to prevent the strikers from reaching the building housing the prime minister's office (the Palais du Gouvernement). When anti-riot brigades clashed with protesters, strikers and pedestrians alike were reportedly forced to run to avoid being bludgeoned by the police. Liberte reported April 16 that seven strikers were detained for questioning by the police.

¶4. (C) Article 57 of Algeria's constitution acknowledges the right to strike and no fewer than four laws, dating from 1990 and 1991, address striking in Algeria. Rachid Malaoui, president of one of two versions of the National Autonomous Union of Public Administration Employees, told us on April 22, however, that the 1992 State of Emergency decree prevents strikers from demonstrating publicly. The April 15 police action took place under the 1992 decree.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: This was the fourth nationwide strike of 2008. While it was nationwide in name and effect, the country was by no means paralyzed. Some cities and regions were more affected than others; in Algiers it was largely business as usual. Algerians have few legal outlets to express their frustrations. Journalist Said Chekroune told us late last year that frustrations in Algeria were at a simmering point, with a major eruption inevitable (ref B). Localized riots in the past week in Tiaret, Gdyl and Annaba suggest that, at least as regards the high level of frustration, Chekroune was right. These repeated nationwide strikes do not appear, however, to be tapping into that frustration in a significant way.
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